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FM AMEMBASSY BANJUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0210
INFO AMEMBASSY CONAKRY
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USDAO DAKAR SG
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY BAMAKO
AMEMBASSY BISSAU
DIA WASHDC//DH06//
AMEMBASSY PRAIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BANJUL 002791

DEPT FOR AF/W
LONDON FOR MCKINLEY
PARIS FOR PERLOW

E.0.12356N DECL:OADR
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [GA](#)
SUBJECT: THE GAMBIA: JAMMEH CLAIMS AN OPEN MANDATE

11. CONFIDENTIAL -- ENTIRE TEXT.

SUMMARY

12. LT JAMMEH, THE PRC, AND THE NEW GOVERNMENT MET THE PEOPLE OF BANJUL AT A MASS RALLY JULY 13, 1994. LT JAMMEH AND OTHER SPEAKERS FOCUSED ON THE NEED FOR CHANGE, THE IMPORTANCE OF ROOTING OUT CORRUPTION, AND THE NEED FOR NATIONAL UNITY. LT JAMMEH PROMISED THAT THE PRC WOULD REMAIN IN POWER AS LONG AS THE PEOPLE OF THE GAMBIA WISHED. A RETURN TO DEMOCRACY WAS NOT DISCUSSED. LT JAMMEH'S REMARKS INDICATE A LACK OF ENTHUSIASM FOR WESTERN DEMOCRACY AND AN IMMEDIATE CONCERN FOR ELIMINATING CORRUPTION. END SUMMARY.

THE PRC MEETS THE BANJULIANS

13. THE ARMED FORCES PROVISIONAL RULING COUNCIL (PRC) CALLED A RALLY AT MCCARTHY SQUARE TO MEET THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY OF BANJUL SATURDAY AUGUST 13, 1994. ALL FIVE CURRENT MEMBERS OF THE PRC ATTENDED, AS WELL AS THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (CABINET) AND THE NEWLY-APPOINTED MAYOR OF BANJUL, MAJOR ANTOUMAN SAHO. THE RALLY WAS RESCHEDULED FROM THE RAINED-OUT EVENT CALLED FOR MONDAY AUGUST 8, 1994. GRIOTS (TRADITIONAL PRAISE-SINGERS) AND FOLKLODIC PERFORMING GROUPS WERE SPECIFICALLY INVITED TO THIS EVENT.

14. ALTHOUGH CALLED FOR 3 PM, MINISTERS WERE NOT SEATED UNTIL NEARLY 4:30 PM. A LIGHT RAIN FELL FOR MOST OF THE RALLY, BUT DID NOT APPEAR TO DIMINISH ATTENDANCE OR THE ENTHUSIASM OF THE CROWD. THE RALLY ENDED NEAR DUSK, AT APPROXIMATELY 6:45 PM.

WE'RE HERE AND WE'RE IN CHARGE

15. LT JAMMEH AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE PRC (LTS SABALLY, SINGHATEH, HAIDARA, AND TOURAY) ARRIVED ON FOOT FROM STATE HOUSE (ABOUT 100 YDS), BUT WERE PRECEDED BY TWO MOTORCYCLE ESCORTS AND TWO TRUCKLOADS OF BODYGUARDS ARMED WITH MACHINE GUNS AND RPG-7S. UPON ENTRY INTO MCCARTHY SQUARE, THE PRC MEMBERS JOINED HANDS WITH THEIR ARMS UPRAISED AND CIRCLED THE SQUARE, ACCEPTING CHEERS AND HANDSHAKES AS THEY PASSED. THEY WERE ACCOMPANIED BY NEARLY 40 GUARDS ARMED WITH AUTOMATIC WEAPONS. SECURITY AT THE AUGUST 13 RALLY WAS MUCH HEAVIER THAN THE CANCELLED AUGUST 8 EVENT, WITH TWICE AS MANY SOLDIERS AND MUCH HEAVIER

WEAPONRY PRESENT.

¶6. UPON TAKING SEATS, THE DAIS WAS APPROACHED BY ALHAJI CONATEH, THE GAMBIA'S MOST PROMINENT GRIOT AND BALAFON PLAYER (AND A FREQUENT VISITOR AT STATE HOUSE BEFORE PRESIDENT JAWARA'S OVERTHROW). ON BEHALF OF ALL THE GRIOTS OF THE GAMBIA, ALHAJI CONATEH THANKED THE PRC FOR THEIR NEW GOVERNMENT AND NOTED THAT THIS WAS THE FIRST OCCASION AT WHICH ALL THE GAMBIA'S GRIOTS HAD BEEN ASSEMBLED TO GREET THE HEAD OF STATE. ALHAJI CONATEH SPOKE IN ENGLISH, WHICH HE FOLLOWED BY REMARKS IN WOLLOF. A HALF-DOZEN OTHER GRIOTS ALSO OFFERED SPEECHES IN WOLLOF ONLY, WHICH IN GENERAL ADVISED LT JAMMEH THAT A TRADITIONAL CHIEF MUST BE JUST AND IMPARTIAL, AND NOT SWAYED BY TIES OF FRIENDSHIP, TRIBE OR FAMILY.

WE LIKE OLD-FASHIONED ENTERTAINMENT

¶7. THE GRIOT'S SPEECHES WERE FOLLOWED BY A MIXED GROUP OF KORA AND BALAFON PLAYERS AND SINGERS, WHO PLAYED FOR SEVERAL MINUTES. FOLKLORIC ENSEMBLES THEN PERFORMED IN SEQUENCE, BEGINNING WITH A JOLA TROUP WHO EXECUTED VERY ACROBATIC DANCES AND SLASHED AT THEMSELVES WITH SWORDS AND KNIVES, UNDERSCORING THEIR INVULNERABILITY TO SUCH WEAPONS. AFTER THE JOLA TROUP, FIVE OTHER FULA AND WOLLOF DANCERS PERFORMED.

WE'VE GOT TO WORK HARD . . .

¶8. AFTER DANCES AND PERFORMANCES WERE FINISHED, THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (CABINET) AND THE NEW MAYOR OF BANJUL WERE INTRODUCED. MAJ SAHO'S SPEECH POINTED OUT THAT JULY 22 WOULD BE REMEMBERED AS A DAY OF PROGRESS OF THE GAMBIA. HE STATED THAT HIS GOALS WERE TO MAKE BANJUL A QUOTE WORLD CLASS CITY UNQUOTE IN WHICH THE SECURITY OF BANJULIANS WOULD REMAIN HIS PRIMARY CONCERN. MINISTERS MADE SHORT SPEECHES FOCUSED ON QUOTE THE CHANGE (OF GOVERNMENT) UNQUOTE AND THE NEED FOR ALL GAMBIANS TO WORK TOGETHER AND TO ABANDON THE BAD HABITS OF THE OLD REGIME. NEITHER INTERIOR MINISTER LT HAIDARA NOR FINANCE MINISTER DABO SPOKE ON THIS OCCASION.

STICK TOGETHER . . .

¶9. LT JAMMEH RECEIVED A THUNDEROUS CHEER WHEN HE ROSE TO SPEAK. HE BEGAN BY ASKING THE CROWD IF THEY WANTED JAWARA BACK. THE CROWD ROARED BACK THAT IT DID NOT. HE ASKED THE QUESTION A SECOND TIME, WITH THE SAME ANSWER. LT JAMMEH THEN POINTED OUT THAT JAWARA HAD QUOTE LED BY DIVIDE AND RULE UNQUOTE, AND THAT EVERYONE HAD SEEN THE RESULTS OF DIVIDE AND RULE IN RWANDA AND SOUTH AFRICA. DIVIDE AND RULE HAD BEEN THE MECHANISM OF COLONIALISM IN AFRICA.

¶10. LT JAMMEH INSISTED THAT TRIBE HAD HELD SWAY OVER BROTHERHOOD (AMONG CO-NATIONALS) UNDER JAWARA, AND THAT EVERYONE COULD SEE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS POLICY IN RWANDA. LT JAMMEH PROMISED THAT THE PRC WOULD NOT ALLOW THIS TO HAPPEN IN THE GAMBIA.

AND REMEMBER WHO WE ARE

¶11. THE PRC CHAIRMAN THEN MOVED TO THE ISSUE OF DEMOCRACY. HE POINTED OUT THAT DEMOCRACY HAD ITS ROOTS IN GREECE AND ROME, AND HAD BEEN THE POLITICAL SYSTEM OF AFRICA'S COLONIAL MASTERS. HE REMINDED THE CROWD THAT GAMBIANS HAD A DIFFERENT IDEA OF

DEMOCRACY, AND ASKED IF GAMBIANS WANTED THE TYPE OF
DEMOCRACY THAT PURCHASED WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION
WHILE GAMBIANS WERE POOR.

WE'LL TAKE CARE OF THINGS . . .

¶12. LT JAMMEH PROMISED BANJULIANS THAT THE PRC WOULD
ASSURE THAT JUSTICE IS DONE. HE ASSURED HIS AUDIENCE
THAT WHEN THEIR WORK IS DONE THE GNA WOULD GO BACK TO
BARRACKS.

¶13. MOVING TO THE QUESTION OF DETAINEES, ESPECIALLY
FORMER POLICE AND ARMY OFFICERS (NOTABLY CPTS CHAM
AND SARR, FORMER SPOKESMAN LT KONTEH, AND FORMER
INSPECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE PA SALLAH JAGNE, AS WELL
AS AN ESTIMATED THIRTY OTHERS), LT JAMMEH WARNED THAT
QUOTE THERE ARE ENEMIES OF THE GAMBIA INSIDE AND
OUTSIDE UNQUOTE, AND THAT OUR (GAMBIANS') DUTY WAS TO
UNITE FOR THE GAMBIA.

AS LONG AS YOU WANT

¶14. LT JAMMEH INTERJECTED THAT WE (THE PRC) ARE HERE
(IN POWER) TO RECOVER QUOTE EVERY BUTUT (THE SMALLEST
UNIT OF THE GAMBIA CURRENCY) PLUNDERED FROM THE
GAMBIA PEOPLE UNQUOTE, AND THAT WE (THE PRC) ARE
HERE TO MAKE SURE THAT THE INTERESTS OF GAMBIANS ARE
SERVED. HE THEN ASSURED THE CROWD THAT THE PRC WOULD
REMAIN IN POWER AS LONG AS THE PEOPLE OF THE GAMBIA
SO WISHED.

¶15. LT JAMMEH CLOSED HIS REMARKS BY PROMISING THAT
THE PRC WAS FOR AFRICA AND AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT. HE
REMINDS HIS LISTENERS THAT THE MEMBERS OF THE
SECURITY FORCES IN DETENTION WANTED LOOTING AND
VIOLENCE, AND THAT THE PRC WOULD NEVER ALLOW SUCH A
SITUATION IN THE GAMBIA. QUOTE NOW, NO ONE IS AT
RISK OF LOSING EVEN A DOG OR A CHICKEN UNQUOTE.

¶16. LT JAMMEH'S FINAL COMMENT WAS THAT THE PRC
WANTED A GAMBIA FREE OF PPP CORRUPTION. WITH A FINAL
QUOTE LONG LIVE GAMBIA UNITY, LONG LIVE AFRICAN
UNITY UNQUOTE, PRC MEMBERS LEFT THE DAIS AND WALKED
BACK TO STATE HOUSE, FOLLOWED BY LARGE NUMBERS OF
CHEERING YOUTH.

COMMENT

¶17. DESPITE ITS RAMBLING, OFF-THE-CUFF DELIVERY, LT
JAMMEH'S ADDRESS WAS HIS FIRST MAJOR DEPARTURE FROM
HIS OFT-DELIVERED EARLIER SET SPEECH ON THE NEED FOR
THE GNA TO ACT OWING TO OFFICIAL CORRUPTION AND THE
PERVERSION OF DEMOCRACY UNDER JAWARA. THIS RALLY
WOULD HAVE BEEN THE APPROPRIATE OCCASION TO ANNOUNCE
THE PRC'S PROGRAM FOR RETURNING DEMOCRACY TO THE
GAMBIA, HAD THE PRC WISHED TO DO SO. THE
ANTI-WESTERN AND ANTI-DEMOCRATIC TONE OF LT JAMMEH'S
REMARKS, HIS FOCUS ON THE PRC'S MISSION TO FIND AND
PUNISH CORRUPTION, AND HIS REFUSAL TO BEND ON THE
ISSUE OF DETENTION OF FORMER ARMY AND POLICE (INCL.
TACTICAL SUPPORT GROUP) PERSONNEL, ALL INDICATE THAT
LT JAMMEH'S AND THE PRC'S THOUGHTS ARE NOT FOCUSED ON
AN EARLY RETURN TO BARRACKS OR A QUICK RETURN TO
REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY IN THE GAMBIA.

¶18. THIS RALLY WAS NOTABLY DIRECTED TOWARD
TRADITIONAL AND LOCAL LEGITIMIZATION OF AUTHORITY, IN
CONTRAST TO AN EARLIER RALLY HELD A WEEK EARLIER AT
THE NATIONAL STADIUM IN FAJARA. PART OF THE RALLY'S
MESSAGE SEEMS TO BE THAT TRADITIONAL AFRICAN
STANDARDS -- RATHER THAN INTERNATIONAL AND WESTERN
ONES -- WILL BE THE TESTS BY WHICH THE PRC WILL

MEASURE THEMSELVES AND THEIR GOVERNMENT.

¶19. LT JAMMEH IS MERCURIAL, AND OFTEN SEEMS TO SPEAK WITHOUT REFLECTION. HIS PAST MISSTATEMENTS APPEAR THOUGHTLESS RATHER THAN DELIBERATELY FALSE, AS IN REGARD TO EARLIER PRC DISSIMULATION ON THE DETAINEE QUESTION. HE COULD EASILY CHANGE HIS MIND AND CALL ELECTIONS QUICKLY. NONETHELESS, THE POPULIST RHETORIC OF THIS RALLY AND HIS IMPLICIT ASSERTION THAT THE PRC CAN INTUIT THE WILL OF THE GAMBIAN PEOPLE WITHOUT MEDIATION OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS DO NOT BODE WELL FOR THE GAMBIA'S POLITICAL EVOLUTION UNDER PRC TUTELAGE.

¶20. LT JAMMEH APPEARS TO BE DEVELOPING INTO AN EFFECTIVE DEMOGOGUE. ALTHOUGH STILL SOMEWHAT STIFF AND AWKWARD, AT THIS RALLY HE ORCHESTRATED THE CROWD'S RESPONSES VERY WELL. LT JAMMEH HAS ALREADY LEARNED TO MOBILIZE HIS PERSONAL POPULARITY AND PUBLIC ADMIRATION FOR HIS AUDACITY AND SENSE OF COMMAND INTO AN EASY JUSTIFICATION FOR CONTINUED POWER. END COMMENT. REGARDS.

WINTER